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Express-News: Military

Rumsfeld: Bases must be closed

By Robert Burns

Associated Press

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WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says the military must close more bases to free up the billions it needs to modernize.

While acknowledging the closures might be more difficult to sell in Congress now that the economic boom is over, Rumsfeld said Americans must understand that if unneeded bases aren't closed, the military will be starved for money.

"Life's hard," he said.

Many politicians oppose closing bases, because it can hurt local economies.

Rumsfeld, 69, dismissed those concerns.

"First of all, the economy's still growing, it's not in the dumps. And second, national security is darned important."

He disclosed Friday he intends to announce this week a plan for substantially reducing Pentagon bureaucracy by combining some civilian and military staffs in the armed services, reducing layers of civilian management and making across-the-board cuts in headquarters staffs.

Rumsfeld said the reductions would be less than 10 percent.

He declined to give a specific figure or estimate how much could be saved.

The across-the-board cutbacks would mirror the "mindless, crude" reductions institutions sometimes are compelled to make out of economic necessity, Rumsfeld said.

He said he would take special care to ensure that truly vital functions aren't eliminated.

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"You don't want to simply blindly reduce numbers in an organization where you have a thin veneer of civilian leadership," he said.

Rumsfeld is looking at a wide range of ways to reduce the cost of running the Pentagon's far-flung operations, not just because he believes it makes sense but because the political reality is that defense budgets aren't going to grow enough to meet all of the military's most critical needs.

"I would characterize us as being in duress," he said of the U.S. military. "We have enormous needs for funds that are not being met in areas that have been neglected over the decade."

The administration has asked Congress to approve \$329 billion in defense spending for the budget year starting Oct. 1 — \$33 billion more than this year.

Rumsfeld has said that even that increase — the largest since the mid-1980s — isn't enough to address all the military's problems.

Rumsfeld said he was encouraged that the Senate Armed Services Committee voted Friday for a new round of base closures.

While acknowledging the committee traditionally supports Pentagon cost-saving initiatives, he said, some members who voted for it this time had opposed it last year.

Winning approval in the House might be more difficult.

In the past, the Pentagon has taken one of two approaches to paring bases: close them and sell the property after investing huge sums to clean up the environmental damage they incurred in decades of use; or realign them by shifting people from several smaller bases to one large one.

This time, Rumsfeld said, the Pentagon is proposing a wider variety of options, including:

Mothballing some bases. He called this "pickling" — to stop using the base but keep the property. This avoids the often-enormous expense of environmental cleanup and keeps the base available for use in a national emergency.

Taking this approach could save "a bucket of dollars," he said.

Close only part of a base.

Mothball part of a base and keep the rest open.

Move people from high-rent office space onto bases that have extra room.

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Keep a base open but lease part of it rather than selling it.

Whatever the approach, Rumsfeld said, the goal should be to make it as simple and painless as possible.

"Try to do it in a way with the minimal trauma on the community. Get into it, get it over with and don't try to cut off the dog's tail one inch at a time hoping it hurts less," he said.

The Pentagon has proposed to Congress that in 2003 an independent commission act on Pentagon recommendations on which bases to close or consolidate.

Rumsfeld said a single round of cuts could save the Pentagon \$3 billion a year, although the savings would not start for several years.

There have been four rounds of base closings, in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995, affecting 97 major bases.

Rumsfeld said he felt strongly that despite the political cost of asking Congress to close bases, it is necessary.

"Why the hell would I leave Illinois and Taos, N.M., and come down here simply to sit around with my finger in my ear and not do what I think is in the best interest of the country," he asked, referring to his hometown of Chicago and his ranch in Taos. "It seems to me it's the right thing to do. The fact there are people fussing about it ... doesn't surprise me."

He noted that President Bush fought the Pentagon on closing bases in Texas when he was governor.

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Korean War remembered

Marine vets lay a wreath to honor slain comrades

BY PAUL CRISTIAN RADU
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

A solemn memorial Friday for veterans of the Korean War turned into a gathering of old comrades to reminisce about their service.

Sixteen veterans of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division took a moment to lay a wreath at the Korean War Memorial.

"We are all getting old and we enjoy one another," said George H. O'Brien Jr. of Midland, a Marine rifle platoon commander in Korea and a Medal of Honor recipient.

The Marines honored the memory of the 54,246 troops who died in Korea between June 25, 1950, and July 26, 1953.

O'Brien, 74, was cited by President

Eisenhower for his valor in leading a charge through an enemy position, in the face of small-arms, artillery and mortar fire.

Shot in the arm, he killed three enemy soldiers in hand-to-hand combat and helped a wounded Marine. He continued to lead the platoon for nearly four hours.

O'Brien said he and other Marines plan to visit Korea next year.

It would be his first time to revisit the country where he once "bravely regained his feet, waved his men onward and continued to spearhead the assault, pausing only long enough to go to the aid of a wounded Marine" as mentioned in his Medal of Honor citation.

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Former Marine George O'Brien of Midland (left), recipient of the Medal of Honor, holds back tears as he shows his appreciation to members of the Marine Corps Color Guard, Sgt. Anthony Garfias, right, and Sgt. Darylion May at the Korean War Memorial on Friday.

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Couple uses tax refund to buy food, give it away

TOM QUIMBY
THE NEWS HERALD

A Callaway couple who used their tax refund as "seed money" for a food giveaway said the event drew donations that doubled their money and enabled them to hand out 93 bags of food.

After listening to a church sermon on fellowship, Marc and Kerry Mathes decided to use \$540 of their \$600 federal tax rebate check to buy and give away food at the Food World in Callaway. The couple received donations before and during the giveaway last month that enabled them to buy \$1,100 worth of groceries.

A Panama City businessman called the Matheses after reading a *News Herald* article on their plans and donated \$100. A woman

who had recently found a job called the same day and used her remaining food stamps — \$70 — to buy food for the drive.

Members of the Matheses' church, Living Word Fellowship, gave \$200.

Additional money came from friends and shoppers at Food World.

The Matheses, who had never held a food drive, said the giveaway exceeded their expectations.

"We started at 10 a.m. and left around 4 p.m. We ended up giving out 93 bags of groceries and about 30 packs of diapers," said Kerry Mathes, 34. "Overall, the majority of people that received it looked

like they needed it. And the other people ... well, at least we could witness to them.

"We had a chance to pray with some people. There was a woman who had kids and started to cry.

She said she had just gotten the food in time and that it was an answer to a prayer."

"Overall, the majority of people that received it looked like they needed it. And the other people ... well, at least we could witness to them."

— Kerry Mathes

Each bag of groceries that was given away included ground beef, spaghetti, spaghetti sauce, bread, milk and cookies. If baby formula was needed, the Matheses or their friends would dash inside and make a buy.

See **GIVEAWAY**, page 4B



News Herald File Photo: Jerry Batten
Marc Mathes of Callaway and his wife, Kerry, with their son, Derrity, 3, recently used most of their \$600 federal tax rebate check to donate food to those less fortunate.

GIVEAWAY: More may be planned

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The father put information about Living Word Fellowship in each bag they gave away.

Marc Mathes, 32, a flight instructor at Tyndall Air Force Base, said that just before they were ready to start the giveaway at 10 a.m., they began praying with their pastor. At that very moment, a man walked up looking for food.

"The very first person that showed up ... his name was Nahum. Nahum is a figure in the Bible," said Marc Mathes. "That's pretty appropriate."

Bill Peris and his wife De, both from Callaway, helped to buy food, pack it and hand it out. They stayed with the Matheses until the last bag was given away.

"We stayed a lot longer than we thought we would because we were having a good time," said Peris, 32, also a flight instructor at Tyndall Air Force Base.

"Marc would run out to people on the other side of the parking lot in the rain and say, 'I'm giving you groceries. It's free, no strings attached.' He'd grab a bag of groceries and run back across the parking lot. Everybody was smiling and thought it was great."

Marc Mathes said the store

manager gave him permission to set up two giveaway tables. Two signs advertised the free food: One was posted on a table and another was near the intersection of Cherry Street and Tyndall Parkway.

Several people asked if there was a catch to the free food.

"It's almost sad, that when there's something nice going on, there's got to be a catch," said Marc Mathes. "People go to the mall thinking they can get a free gift, and they have to sign up for cell-phone service to get the gift."

Kerry Mathes said she and her husband are thinking of giving away food once a month. Peris said he would be willing to help in future giveaways.

Marc Mathes said he learned that it's best to notify a store's meat section ahead of time before making large buys of meat. He ended up buying 33 packs of ground meat from Food World, nearly cleaning them out.

The purchase came after he bought 60 packs of meat at another outlet. The meat was stored in a cooler outside the store before being given away.

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Luke airspace protected, FAA says

New Sky Harbor routes won't affect base, agency says

By Marty Saurzopf
The Arizona Republic

azcentral.com

Find out more about the controversy over Sky Harbor International Airport flight paths at airport.azcentral.com.

There is nothing in Northwest 2000 that changes what Luke is doing today.

Gus Nezer

Local air traffic manager,
Federal Aviation Administration

Federal aviation officials insisted Wednesday that proposed changes to flight paths over the Phoenix area would have no impact on Luke Air Force Base, which Glendale leaders are determined to protect.

Gus Nezer, local air traffic manager for the Federal Aviation Administration, said the proposed Northwest 2000 system of arrival and departure routes for Sky Harbor International Airport would not encroach on Luke's airspace or affect its operations.

"There is nothing in Northwest 2000 that changes what

Luke is doing today," Nezer told about 30 people, including four Glendale City Council members, at a public meeting at the Glendale Civic Center.

Under questioning from council members Joyce Clark and Phil Lieberman, Nezer said Luke's airspace in the West Valley is strictly protected, and the proposed new flight paths were designed around that space.

Luke officials have been relatively silent on the issue, although the base issued a statement last week indicating that the FAA's Northwest 2000 proposal would have some effects on the base. A Luke official attending the Wednesday

meeting reiterated that statement but declined to elaborate. Luke Air Force Base, in western Glendale, is estimated to have a \$2 billion annual economic impact on the area.

Clark, whose council district includes the base, said she was concerned that Luke officials might be "constrained" from getting publicly involved in the debate over new flight paths.

But Nezer and FAA operations manager Bob Fletcher insisted that the federal agency has a close working relationship with Luke and said regular meetings are held with base officials. In fact, Nezer said,

cooperation between the FAA and the U.S. Department of Defense is at an all-time high in the area.

The FAA is trying to implement its Northwest 2000 plan to alleviate congestion and potentially hazardous crowding in flight paths northwest and northeast of the Valley. Nezer said the agency hopes to implement the revised flight plans by February.

The proposed routes, however, have sparked loud protests from East Valley cities, which believe they will have more airplane noise over their communities.

our military installations to be, an independent Base Realignment and Closure Commission could conclude otherwise.

An independent commission, precisely what the administration wants Congress to reauthorize, is the right thing to do anyway. To do anything else defies fiscal responsibility and endangers the country's ability to field armed services ready to deal with evolving global exigencies. This is clearly a case of national need trumping local angst.

Simply, the world has changed. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is now preparing a report on just how the military must change with it. But even if the preliminary evidence didn't overwhelmingly indicate how oversubscribed we are, it would still be a healthy thing to review our bases to determine their defense value.

Base-closure critics argue that the nation has yet to realize savings from the last round of closures in 1995. However, it takes about six years before savings are realized, given the need for cleanup and transfer to civilian authorities. We're in Year 6 now.

Other closures via independent commission occurred in 1988, '91 and '93, with all

four accounting for 97 bases closed. The Pentagon says that these saved the country \$15 billion and that an additional \$3.5 billion could be saved by the end of the decade.

In any case, the alternative is just too illogical: Keeping unneeded bases open because they cost money to close.

Many demands will be put on the armed services in the decades ahead. Much demand will be placed on the defense budget, from national missile defense to modernization to other new weapons programs to the \$18.4 billion increase Bush is now seeking for defense spending. Base closings can help us achieve these.

McCain has teamed with Michigan Sen. Carl Levin, Democratic chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to sponsor legislation that would authorize an independent commission and, if the commission deemed it necessary, base closures in 2003 and 2005. Sen. Jon Kyl is a co-sponsor.

As in past closings, Congress would either have to approve or reject the commission's recommendations in their entirety. No self-serving tinkering involved.

Congress should pass this legislation. Fiscal and military necessity demand it.

B8 THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2001

Editorial

The opinion of The Arizona Republic

STRESSES ON BUDGET ARE CLEAR, AND MCCAIN BILL SHOULD PASS Shut down outdated bases

The White House and the Pentagon say the nation has about 25 percent more military bases than it needs. Some influential members of Congress, including Arizona's Rep. Bob Stump, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, insist that we shouldn't close any because we save little or no money when we do.

When Congress returns from its summer recess, it should authorize another two rounds of base closings. A bill by Arizona Sen. John McCain would accomplish that.

This conclusion likely causes some consternation. The economic consequences of base closings on communities can be devastating. Arizona's six military installations, for instance, contribute an estimated \$6.1 billion annually to the state economy. They include Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Fort Huachuca in Sierra Vista and the Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma.

Arizonans can be reasonably assured that the state's bases are well positioned as indispensable parts of the national de-

